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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/766,072	01/28/2004	Willem Hupkes	TS1330 (US)	2424
23632	7590	12/11/2006		EXAMINER DOERRLER, WILLIAM CHARLES
SHELL OIL COMPANY P O BOX 2463 HOUSTON, TX 772522463			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3744				

DATE MAILED: 12/11/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/766,072	HUPKES ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	William C. Doerrler	3744	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 31 October 2006.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-68 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-66 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) 67 and 68 is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on 28 January 2004 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 10-31-2006.
4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Priority

Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1-42 and 55-66 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hodges et al (from the 10-31-2006 IDS).

Hodges et al disclose a process of liquefying a gaseous methane rich feed comprising, providing the gaseous methane rich feed at elevated pressure (through conduit 20) to a tube 13 to produce liquid product (removed through line 80). The system removes a vapor refrigerant through line 25, compresses it in compressor 30 and condenses it in heat exchanger 43. A condensed portion of the refrigerant is sub-cooled in heat exchanger 15. Line 16 cools, liquefies and subcools the vapor portion of the refrigerant. The control system is described in lines 8-23 of column 2, with the production of liquid product being optimized by a set of manipulated variables including controlling the mass flow rate of the light and heavy portions of the refrigerant and controlled variables including the temperature difference at the warm end of the heat exchanger. The way the claims are currently written requires only one variable from each set to meet the

claimed method (1 from the manipulated set and one from the controlled set). The dependent claims which add to the set or further define one of the possible variables are not seen to be necessary to meet the claimed process as only one of the variables are required, not necessarily the variable that is further defined. For example, claim 1 requires one of a set of variables (A, B, or C). Hodges et al shows A- controlling the mass flow rate of the heavy refrigerant. Adding a D to the list of possibilities, or further defining B, does not change the fact that Hodges et al still shows one claimed variable of the set. In regard to claim 10, Hodges et al show off-gas passage 76. In regard to claim 23, line 58 of column 1 states that nitrogen content can be controlled.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 43-54 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hodges et al in view of Newton.

Hodges et al discloses applicants' basic inventive concept, a methane rich stream liquefying process which uses a manipulated variable and a controlled variable to optimize the production of liquefied gas, substantially as claimed with the exception of using an auxiliary refrigerant to condense the refrigerant used to condense the methane rich stream. Newton shows this feature to be old in the gas liquefaction art. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicants' invention from the teaching of Newton to modify the gas liquefaction process of Hodges et al by using an auxiliary refrigerant to condense the main refrigerant to improve the condensation of the main refrigerant and thus improve the cooling imparted to the gas to be condensed.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 67 and 68 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to William C. Doerrler whose telephone number is (571) 272-4807. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 6:30-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Cheryl Tyler can be reached on (571) 272-4834. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.



William C. Doerrler
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3744

WCD